

AN
EXPEDIENT
TO
PRESERVE PEACE
AND
AMITY,
AMONG DISSENTING
BRETHREN.

By a Brother in CHRIST.



LONDON,
Printed in the Yeere, 1647

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PAC

Charles Simpson
AMONGST
1756

THE BISHOP OF CHRIST



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Being it hath pleased Almighty GOD, by
 Brother in Christ; at this time to put
 a stop to the effusion of Blood, so prodigal-
 ly powred out in our native Country, and
 thereby given a hope of speedily stating the
 whole Kingdome, in a firme and durable
 Peace: It doth not a little grieve my soul,
 that this happinesse should be clouded or retarded, under the
 pretence of Religion, which is the best cimeter of Peace. But
 herein I take comfort, that God hath his own work, no lesse in
 these controversies, then before hee had in the warres, and will
 reap glory out of both. We must neither start nor slagger, when
 we see Schismes and Heresies rise, in the visible Church; They
 are the Tares, which the envious man soweth, among Gods
 Wheat; and *Christ* hath fore-warned us, and so hath his Apo-
 stles, that through the rage of Satan, and corruption of men, there
 must of necessity in all times and ages arise scandals, dissensions,
 and Heresies in the Church; for the exercise of the godly, that
 their faith might be proved and manifested to the world, by hold-
 ing their ground, and cleaving to the truth. Yes, the very Gos-
 pel of *Christ*, which in it selfe, is a Gospel of peace, by the blood

of the Son, reconciling of us, to the Father. Meeteth with such Malignancy and opposition in the world, that to the true professors of it, it becometh, a Gospel of warre and hatred, and persecution. This is the condition of the faithfull, to be alwayes in outward troubles, wherein were they not supported with inward peace, they were of all men, most miserable. Upon this ground *Martin Luther*, that undanted champion of the truth, being taxed by the Emperour in a great Councell, that he was the man, who by his Doctrine had disturbed the long continued Peace in *Germany*: Answered, that what others thought he could not tell, but it rejoyced his heart, to see that there was divisions, about, the word of God; for Christ came not to bring peace but the Sword. By all this it appeareth, that as every true beleever must expect tribulation in this world, so hee shall have peace with God, and ought to have peace and communion one with another; *Christ* when he left his Disciples, left them Peace for a Legacy, and a Commandement, to love one another; we are also frequently exhorted, to follow after Peace; to bee of one mind, and preserve the unity of the spirit, in the bond of Peace. How comes it then about that we see so many minds, among brethren, who will all passe for the Disciples of *Christ*; and that from the diversity of minds, wee see, so many rents and separations, whereby the bond of Peace is broken, and the spirits of men, disunited! Certainly when it cometh so far, it can proceed from no other root then from our lusts, which war in our earthly members. Otherwise difference of judgement, among true beleivers, in the sincere search of truth, may well stand with unity of affections, without breach of Peace. For it is manifest enough, that the true beleivers over the whole world, are not of one mind, in all things that concerne Religion, and the worship of God. Witnessse the severall formes of outward worship, among all Nations, no lesse variations then their fashions. And this may also happen, among the faithfull, as well in the same, as in severall Nations; nay if we consider at home, wee shall find, the like difference in our selves, that we need not wonder at it, in others; for what Christian is there, who in pursuit and study for truth, observeth not in himselfe, degrees,

degrees, and diversities of judgement; every day teacheth knowledge, this life being a time of growth, not of perfection; nevertheless, no man hateth himself, because he formerly knew not so much, as now he doth, but rather praiseth God, for having revealed to him, a greater measure of knowledge by this rule, wee should deale with others, as we do with our selves, for that is the rule of Charity. We are all Gods building, and albeit, they may chauce to differ among themselves. They are not for that to make a breach in the building; but in Love and Peace, suffer their opinions, to bee tryed, by the word of God, making that the decider, not the breeder of controversies.

This being premised, I will proceed to the subject, lying before me, and take my beginning, from the beginning it self.

Almighty God doing all his own works in order, was pleased to make Man, a sociable creature; first in himself, associating an earthly and heavenly nature, that one might guide and governe the other; and himsefse receive glory from both. Then by ingrafting in that compounded nature, rules of spirituall and humane duty, whereby he might be fitted for a well-being, in the society of others.

For as the conjunction of flesh and spirit, though parts far differing in nature, make one man; so the conjunction of many men, though of severall ages, complections, humors, passions, callings and degrees, make up a common-wealth, for the good of all, in their temporall well-being. Even so likewise, the conjunction of many spirits and minds of men, though dissenting in opinions, wayes and strength of judgement, yet aiming at the same end, by faith in *Christ*, to attain salvation. Maketh a common union or a Church, for the good of all, in their eternall well-being. Flesh alone, nor spirit alone, cannot make a man, but the union of both, no more can a Common-wealth by it self, nor a Church by it self, make men temporally and eternally happy, but the unity and harmony of both. They are so conjoynd and intertwined together, that as the soule is in the body, so is the Church in the Common-wealth: single they cannot subsist. For there never was nor can there be, any multitudes of men, that bodied themselves,

into a Common-wealth, who agreed not in some kind of Religion ; neither can any multitude of men body themselves , into a Church , but they must be subject to some kind of government. These two cannot be separated, without the ruine of both. Separation destroying Society , wherein consisteth the happinesse of man ; for in heaven, wee cannot bee happy alone, nor on earth without society. These principles are written by the God of order, in the tables of humane nature, which are commonly called, the light or the Law of nature. But sin and time having so sullied that Character, that it was scarce legible by posterity. God was pleased to revive it againe, to his peculiar people ; writing it, with his own finger, in Tables of stone, to authorize and moralize it, to all generations, for their good, therein giving power to the Magistrate to take care , for the keeping and preserving, of both Tables ; placing our duty to him, between our duty to God, and towards our neighbour, that hee might looke , for the good of man both wayes. Our duty to God, is contrayned in few-er precepts , but more words ; it seeming necessary , that God should explaine himselfe, in his own cause, leaving no power to any man , to adde or diminish , or interpret his Lawes, but by his own word ; which made *Moses* though he were a Law-giver in *Israel*, yet he would not judge , the gatherer of sticks upon the Sabbath day , without consultation with the Lord. Before the written Law, every father of a family was both Priest and Magistrate, to looke to both ; and the greater the family or society was so much higher was the Magistrate, and revered with more honour, as being the common parent, caring for the whole Country. This Law therefore of Nature, being the very dictate, of God himself, may not improperly be termed a divine Law. There were also other Lawes, which God prescribed by his servant *Moses*, to the people of *Israel*, politieke and Iudiciall Lawes, for preserving humane society, and governing the Common-wealth ; and Ceremo-iall Lawes, for the outward manner and forme of his publike worship ; for performance whereof, he ordained divers Sacrifices and Sacrificers ; allotting maintainance for them both.

But when the time fore-appointed came, that God would restore man, to that happiness, he had deservedly lost, by the sin of the first *Adam*; he sent his onely Son *Iesus Christ* the second *Adam*, in the flesh; who after he had manifested his divine power to the world, by his Doctrine and miracles, did by his last words on the Crosse, and by the first visible testimony of the power of his death finish and consummate the Law, and rent from the top to the bottome, the vaile of separation; by both declaring, the necessity of types, and ceremonies, places and times of worship, differences of people, Sacrifices and Sacrificers, fixed and impropriated maintainance; for any of them, was no longer to bee continued strictly in the letter, although a morall equity shadowed by them was to be perpetuall. Neither did our Saviour in the constitution of his Evangelicall Church, revive any of them, nor ordain any set form of worship, rule for government, or a certain and speciall maintainance for his Ministers; but only repaired and restored man, to that way and manner of worship, which *Adam* had in his innocency, prescribing him, to serve God the Father of spirits, in spirit and in truth, without otherwise confining him to time, place, gesture, posture, or other circumstances, which of their own nature are not permanently confineable. In like sort, the blessed Apostles, whom *Christ* sent into the world, to publish the glad tydings of Salvation, laid no other foundation, as necessary thereunto, then *Iesus Christ*, and what he had laid himself, for they were only master builders, on that corner stone *Christ Iesus*. What they declared to any people converted to the Gospel concerning any rule of order, about the outward man, or his Christian behaviour, in publike service; it was only a temporary advise, suitable to the times, Countries, and occasions, wherein they lived; not universally binding to all Nations, and generations to come. In their dayes, there was neither Christian State, nor Christian Magistrate, nor any publike power, to countenance or appoint the outward government of the Church; in default whereof, it was necessary for them, to make such orders and constitutions as might serve, for those present times; nevertheless, as *Christ* himself, took upon him, no civill authority, so, gave hee

none; to his Apostles, nor they, to the Ministers succeeding. For when *Christ* was required, to divide an inheritance, betwixt two brothers, he asked with indignation, who had made him a Judge or divider over them; and when the case of the Incestuous person, fell out at *Corinth*, St. *Paul* inflicted no temporall punishment upon him, only advised the brethren, that whiles hee stood obstinate against all reproof, to shun his company, and cast him out of their communion, that the shame thereof, making him sensible of his sinne, it might beget repentance; and make him returne, to the fellowship of true beleivers. I verily thinke, that if all the directions, which the Apostles have left recorded in Scripture, were laid in one view together; no man, nor multitudes of men, how learned soever could collect, or frame out of them all, an exact body of Church government, in all the parts and Circumstances thereof, to bee imposed as a divine, binding, infallible rule, upon all Christian Churches and Kingdomes, in the world. Indeed where we meet, with any Connells or constitutions of the blessed Apostles, who were holy men, indued with more immediate power, from *Christ*, with a larger measure of the spirit of truth, and consequently with a greater certainty of judgment, then any of their Ministeriall successors; we may rely upon them, and make them our patternes; only remembering the distinction of times, that the Apostolicall Church, was in infancy, and under persecution, and the *English*, in full growth and dominion; in so much, that in the framing of Ecclesiasticall orders, an eye and regard must ever bee had, to the civill Government, which alwayes aymeth at the publike good, both of Church and State, wherein the Church is lodged. The Ministers doubtlesse, have power by their office, to advise and instruct, exhort and rebuke out of the word, in a brotherly way, but it is as doubtlesse, that the power is in the Christian Magistrate, upon hearing their advice, to constitute and establish, under the naturall notion of order. such decrees, as upon due debate, and deliberation, they shall find most wholsome and agreeable to the present State. This is also to be observed, that no man ought to take unto himself, the office and honour, to Minister for his brethren, in things pertain-
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ing unto God, unlesse hee be lawfully called thereunto. *Christ* himself, was sent by the Father, and annointed by the spirit, to his heavenly office; by *Christ*, the holy Apostles were sent into the world, from whom they had their immediate Commission, and the blessed Apostles following their pattern, did not only send and appoint Pastors over all Churches in their present times; but, also left rules and directions, for ordaining all others, for the time to come, till the worlds end. I make no question, but God doth in our dayes, call and stirre up many to this holy office, by particular motions of his Spirit; yet that exempteth not the persons so called, from manifesting and approving their vocation, according to the rules left in Scripture: where we are commanded, to try the spirits of men, whither they be of God; and the Spirits of the Prophets, peculiarly such as are called to the Ministry, are subject to the Prophets, as fitting to be tryed and examined by them, who by long experience; and without reproach, have conversed in the Church, and dispenced the misteries of Salvation.

From this brief and plaine deduction, I shall lay down some few Positions, as ground-lines of the discourse ensuing.

1. *That God hath by his Son, taken away all ties of necessity, for observing any part or parcell of the Ceremoniall Law.*
2. *That God by Christ, hath restored man to that spirituall worship, which Adam had in time of his Innocency.*
3. *That Christ hath not appointed, any set or absolute form of Government in his Church, binding to all times and Nations.*
4. *That whatsoever the Apostles wrote concerning outward Government, it was not, in nature of an universall Law, but only by way of order and advice, answerable to these Primitive times and occasions.*
5. *That the Ministers of the Church, as they are Ministers, have no temporall Power, Indicature, or maintenance positively and particularly allotted them, by Christ or his Apostles, but only in the generall, that it be sufficient and plentifull, that thereby they may be examples unto others of hospitality and good works,*
learning

learning the manner and speciall determination, to the Christian Magistrate and the Lawes of the Land.

6. *That the Christian Magistrate hath the highest power, of ordering and governing the Church of God, which is a visible company, not onely of Ministers and Officers, but of all Beleevers; and is intrusted to him, forasmuch, as the Church is in the Common-wealth, and not the Common-wealth in the Church.*

7. *Whosoever hath a Mission, to undertake the Ministry, ought first to find himself inwardly called, then undergo a lawfull Tryall, and receive approbation, with the prayers and benediction of the Presbitery.*

Now concerning this great controversie in our Commonwealth, about the government of the Church. I shall from these Principles, according to the small ability God hath given me, unbiassed, by any opinion or affection, to any kind of Government, nor yet for any covetous, nor ambitious desire or designs in my self, but meerly ayming at the good of Gods Church and of my Country; set down, how I conceive, our supream Magistrate; may establish such a Church government, as might preserve Amity among Brethren, yet not oppugne any rules Christ hath left behind him.

The two houses of Parliament, have already, upon ripe deliberation, passed an Ordinance for a Presbyteriall government, with all the limitations thereof: Which government I am verily perswaded; if it be duly executed, will prove the best Moderator, betwixt dissenting Brethren. For it is such a government, as taketh away the ill and exorbitance of any other, reserving that which is good in them, and so much the better it ought to be liked; because it disliketh those parties that oppose it; for surely hee is esteemed the best and most unpartiall Moderator, who in reconciling parties in such indifferences, displeaseth them all; yet if this government, may not have so much as an Vmpires power, to constrain obedience; or else putteth not, that power in practise; then it will be vilified, and of no esteem.

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Therefore that it may not prove a dead uselesse letter, I doe first conceive, that it should be established with Peralties, and put in present execution, and made positive; without allowing a limited time unto it for approbation. For without that, it may be altered in whole or in part, at the Judgement of the Makers; but with that, it would leave every man, doubtfull and indifferent, which will lessen or take away, the true value, and operation of it.

In the next place, I conceive, as an especiall wheel, of this motion, and a strong fortification of the Government; that care be taken to keep and incourage the Ministers of the word, in a perpetuall and constant practise, of their Function; and to remove all occasions, which might any way divert them, from their holy calling.

Howsoever it comes about, I know not, but certain it is, that since, the Church was poisoned, with a temporall revenue and carnall estimation, given to Ministers, for their masters sake; Pride and covetousnesse, have predominated amongst them; who have bin, and ever will bee; the roots of much evill, and combustions in those States and Churches, where they have had any power; so farre as forgetting their calling, and the patterne of *Christ*, they have ever bin observed, for the maintenance of their secular pomp and greatnesse, to bee the chiefe hinderers of Reformation, to the purity and humility of the Gospel; knowing it must first begin at themselves. Therefore for the rooting out and preventing ambition among them, it might bee good to take away those titles of separation and division, which have had their originall from *Rome*. As to be called Clergy, as if they were holy and the people prophane; or Divines, as if they were all heavenly, and not formed, of the same earth, with the people; certainly they can have no higher title, then to be called Ministers of the Gospel; bringing from God to man, the gladydings of reconciliation and Peace. For place and dignities, they are either Officiall, which are already taken away; or Personall, which should be left, to the voluntary discretion of every man; for if in humility, they strive to go behind all men in place; and before them in goodnesse, the people will

will be ready to give, even their eyes, in testimony of their love and estimation of them. I shall forbear in this place to set down particularly, how Covetousnesse may bee also removed from the Ministry; because the remedy thereof, as of many other things conducing to the good of the Church; how Religion may bee kept and perpetuated in truth and purity; freed from the danger of relapsing to Popery; how the Ministers may be for ever provided with a plentiful maintenance over all the Kingdome, how their Widowes and Orphans, (if there be need) may be relieved, are already plainly and largely laid down, in another Treatise, by a well-wisher, to the Peace of our Sion; which way teth only for a fit occasion to bee produced. Wherein no new charge is laid upon the people; but only part of the pious donations of our Ancestors to the Church, and good uses, are rectified and reduced.

This being done, it may then seeme necessary, so to hedge and defend this Government, held forth by Parliament; that it may neither receive damage from Enemies without, nor bee uncharitably torne and shattered, by Schismes and opinions within.

It hath pleased God so miraculously to blesse this Kingdome; that we have thrown off the yoke of Rome, which neither we nor our Fathers could bear. The Pope, and the Bishops, the head, and the tayle, are sent back from whence they came. The gap which they had made, is by Gods goodnes, and care of this Parliament, filled up, with a moderate Presbyteriall government, sufficiently armed to keep out the wild Boare, that destroyed our Vineyard, and that common implacable enemy from returning. But there are some little Foxes yet among us, that earth in our ground, and annoy our Vineyard, and by craft or rudenesse, weaknesse or wilfulnesse, bring scandals upon our holy profession. That therefore; our Church may injoy her peace, and bee onely Militant against sin and Satan. The Magistracie must take care, to preserve it from disturbance. As the present conjuncture of our Church standeth; they who seeme most to distast or oppose this kind of government, are known amongst us, by the name of dissenting Brethren; which are of two sorts. Rigid Presbyterians, and

Independants. I know not, how nor by whom these names, were invented, but I make use of them, as current termes, by which they are distinguished. Though indeed, in one seeming regard, disclaiming as some say the power of the Magistrate, they are both Independants, in effect; for so they both would hang on their own hinges, nor have any other judge of their Religious actions, but themselves; a thing wholly inconsistent with our civil Government. Of the rigid Presbyterians, we may account, as of younger brethren; men and minds neerer a kin to ours: yet rather aiming to invest themselves, with Will and Power, then, in humility submit to the Ordinances of the Magistrate, who is the Ordinance of God. Yea, they seem to bee so greedy of this absolute power, over the actions and Consciences of men, that rather then want it, they will derive their right from *Jesus Christ*, making it *Jure divino* to be in themselves. This was also the Bishops claim, and these brethren seem to set up, Episcopacy disguised; for they drive at the same ends, shunning to give an account of their actions to the supream Magistrate, and subjecting all men, to a seperated government of their own erection; but because I have already shown, that no such divine sanction, ratified by *Christ* or his Apostles, can be found, in the records of holy Scripture; and I shall hereafter prove more at large, that this pretence, directly crosseth, and supplanteth the Ordinance and obedience of the civil Magistrate, which are indeed *Jure divino*. I shall desire these our brethren, at their leysure, to let us know, whether *Christ* did ever appoint any thing to bee universally received *jure divino*, which was not necessary to salvation; and whether lawfull obedience to the Magistrate in outward government of the Church, neither adding nor diminishing from the precepts of *Christ*, necessary to salvation; be an impediment therunto, or prejudice to any mans Conscience. In the meane time, be they intreated, in the feare of God, and by the love of brethren, to lay aside these ungrounded opinions, and prefer the Peace and Unity of the Church, before any needlesse disputes, which may breed a rupture in the Common-wealth. The other sort called Independants, goe a degree further, most of them refusing to mingle with us, in the Or-

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distances of Gods worship, and Communion of Saints, and when they are desired to shew their reasons, their strongest plea is, that so long, as they are not convinced in their judgement, they ought not, to be constrained in their Consciences, nor forced, to assent to that, which they disapprove; And this indeed is no unbrotherly plea, but some say they may not there, requiring further a liberty of Conscience, not only to be subject, or not subject, to the said Government, but to have also a toleration, to set up another government against it, under the same authority, that disallows it, telling us that wee ought not, to *bruise the broken reed, nor quench the smoking Flax*, nor offend our weak brethren, for whom *Christ dyed*.

Whether this bee (as some say) only a popular flag, to call in multitudes, to the Standard of liberty or not, I shall bestow a little time, to search and sift, this point to the Bran: and for the more orderly clearing thereof, I will lay down, as I have formerly done, some few assertions which I presume, will not be denied, on either side; the opening whereof, will discover the truth, wee seek for, and make the objections, that obscure it, vanish.

1. *That the nature of Conscience is so free in it selfe, that it cannot be constrained, by any Power of man.*
2. *That there is no Rule, to bind the Conscience, but onely the infallible word of God.*
3. *That the Christian Magistrate judging and decreeing by that Rule, ought to be obeyed, for Conscience sake.*

FOR the first point, it will not be amiss to looke into the nature of Liberty, and then of Conscience, from whence will appeare the unconstrainednesse thereof. Liberty in generall is a faculty of the Will, whereby it is enabled to accept or refuse any medium or object represented to it as conduable to its end. This Liberty is taken divers wayes; there is a Naturall, a Civill and a Supernaturall or Divine. Naturall Liberty wherein we are borne, is a faculty of willing and nilling, flying or following.

ing, choosing or refusing, doing or not doing any thing in order to the conservation of a naturall State. The Subject thereof is properly the Will, and the objects good or evil in order to preservation. Civill liberty is a freedome which we exercise under the constitutions of some Politicall society. The Naturall liberty of every particular man, would bee the greatest servitude of all. Hence happily wee have *Leges a legendo*, which doe not permit us the roving liberty of Nature, to choose or refuse, doe or not doe what naturally we list. The Will cannot be constrained in the act of willing (for it were a contradiction to will unwillingly) but by a Civill power it may bee restrained from the effect in some penalty prescribed. It's to be observed, that this Civill liberty in some respects, is both larger and narrower then the Naturall : It is larger, because in a Civill constitution the preservation of all men is better caution'd and cared for : And it is narrower, because many things which wee might all naturally doe, are restrained by the lawes of Society.

Here is therefore a Liberty, but still under some power coercive, or rather corrective of Naturall liberty : So that wee may well say, when a man is released out of Prison, hee is set at liberty, though he be still under the Civill tye of the Law ; and when he hath payed his debts, that hee is freed of his bonds, yet so as alwayes to be bound with those of civill Society : And because we are exempted from the will and tyranny of the Prince, wee are called Free-men, having the liberty and protection of our Lawes, though otherwise, they bind us to obedience : In this place all kind of Dispensations, Pardons, releasments, absolutions, exemptions and the like ; are said to give us a Civill liberty, by taking of some restraint. Supernaturall liberty, is the restitution from Naturall servitude ; for pure nature, wherein Man was created, had a perfect Liberty ; but nature corrupted by sin, fell into slavery ; from whence, it can onely bee restored by Grace.

Conscience, is a faculty of the Soule, which sitteth in the throne, and hath a superintendency, and dominion over the whole man ; as it were a Lieutenant deputy, under God. Nothing else peth

the Court of Conscience: hither are brought the errors of the Understanding, the depravations of the Will, the tumults of the Affections, the distempers of the Mind, the disorders of the Body, to receive their doom, to be approved or disapproved, condemned or acquitted. She is furnished with all things, concurring to judgement; She hath right to accuse, credit to witnesse, power to judge; in her, these things are nor incompatible. When she accuseth, you cannot implead her, for her bill is good in law. When shee witnesseth, you cannot disprove her, for she was present at the fact; when she judgeth, you cannot appeal from her, for there is no higher power on earth. Therefore let us take the Conscience of man, eyther in his estate corrupted, or regenerated; we see all humaine Power is below, and consequently can have no power to constrain her. As the sight, cannot be forced, to discern that cloth black, which is white; nor the tast, to judge honey, bitter, which is sweet; no more can the Conscience be any way compelled, to allow that which she condemneth, or condemn that which she alloweth. There bee two engines, commonly made use of, to batter the Consciences of men; Sophistification, and Persecution, first to ensnare men, with deceitfull shewes, and arguments; then if that will not serve, to fright and terrifie men, with violence and torments; these two, are exquisitely planted, and practised, in the kingdom of Antichrist, by that old Engineere of all mischief, the Devill. Where the Jesuits and other Emisseries, do compass Sea and Land, and are sent abroad, like Frogs and Locusts, to seduce and captivate poore Profelites, making them seven times more, the children of the Devill; And the Inquisition, that Court of darkenesse, and antichamber of Hell, is set up, as a chief pillar of Popedom, to torture mens bodies, and rack their Consciences, and drive men to death and desperation. Yet all this, can goe no farther, then to force and afflict, and kill the body, but the Conscience still triumpheth, shee is free; though the hands bee bound, and the feet be fettered; this was well known, by that constant Martyr who stood out, the brunt of both. —

Disputare non possum, mori possum.

Dispute I cannot, but I can Dye : and so refute both your Arguments, and your torments. Death is the uttermost, that the power and malice of Man can doe ; and no man, but hee may if he will, as well dye with a free Conscience, as live in it. But some man may say ; have not many for feare of death or disgrace, renounced the Truth, against their Conscience? Many have indeed, but in doing thereof, they have rather defiled their Conscience, than forced it, for still it is their own voluntary act, judging by a false, erroneous light, that it is better for them, to forsake *Christ*, then to lose their estates, honours, or their lives : and that it is their own act ; appeareth, by the punishment, which the justice of God, will lay upon them, for their own sin ; and not for the sin of others, who went about to constrain them.

1. Nevertheless, the Conscience sitteth like a *Lucene*, in the soule of man, commanding over all : and uncontrouled by any humane power. Yet shee vaileth and submitteth to the higher Powers, of God and his word, by which she standeth bound, to give full obedience, under the fearfull penalties, of Rebellion and sin. The reason is, because the word of God is infallible, but the word of man, very deceitfull ; any thing propounded without the word of God, unlesse it bee demonstrative in it selfe, is subject to Errour, though it bee never so well meant. But when the Conscience, findeth in the word, a bottome, to fix, and to stand upon, shee judgeth it, needlesse any longer, to halt or hold off ; to doubt, or dispute, but shutteth her eyes, and believeth. The Conscience of her selfe, hath in every man, a naturall light, though it bee but dim and clouded, this was never quite extinguished, by the fall. By which divers Peoples and Nations, who never heard of *Iesus Christ*, nor had any glimpse of the light of his word, have bin ble to discern, not onely the truth of naturall things, but also groped after supernaturall ; acknowledging a *G O D*
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by his workes, though not knowing, how to worship him by his Word; and by the improvement of this light, they have attained, to many excellent morall Precepts, for the planting of vertue, in the hearts of men, and to admirable Lawes and Constitutions, for the government of them, in Societies and Statutes. Whereof many of them in both kinds, have been ratified and approved by the light of the Word revealed. Which plainly declareth unto us, that the naturall light of Conscience, is a beame, and remainder, of that divine light, which was at first infused into our Natures, afterwards obscured, by disobedience; and againe restored by Regeneration, in the soules of all true believers. All light wee know, transmit-
Ad modum recipientis, reth, and dispateth it selfe, to the capacity of the receiver. It leaveth stone Walls in darknesse, but shadeth it self, thorow glasse-windowes.

Now, transparent bodies, are like illuminated soules, where *Iesus Christ*, the light of the World entereth, there is light indeed; there the Consciences of men, are so already enlightened, that they can judge of all things, and are judged of nothing, forasmuch, as they swerve not from the touchstone of judgement, the word of G O D. Now if any shall say, that the word of G O D is called a Law of liberty, rather freeing, then binding us up. I answer; that it is, truly so called, because it freeth us, from the bondage of Sinne, the servitude of Lust, and captivity of Satan; But by the same reason, that it releaseth us, from sinne, it bindeth us to obedience, and to the service of G O D, which is perfect freedome. There is a friendly way in the conversation of men; to bind those, who keepe a loose governance, of themselves, from hurtfull things; some from Wine, some from fruit, some from unwholsome soode, to which they have an irregular appetite. Such is the singular love of G O D towards us, to tye up, by the Law of his Word, our voruly and inordinate Appetites, from

from the pursuit of sinfull and unlawfull things, which would prove our poyson, and perdition, in which regard we have great cause, to rejoyce in these bonds; which are not irons of imprisonment, but bonds of perfection; retaining and with holding us, from relapsing into sin, and leading of us, into the glorious liberty of the Sonnes of God, in these bonds there is no constraint, for God himselfe who made us, by his word, and can dissolve us, at his pleasure, will not use his power to constraine us; he delighteth not in a forced worship, but onely obligeth us to a willing obedience, by setting of us free.

3. The conscience therefore, unconstrained in it self, yet tyed up by the word standeth bound, to obey these lawes and decrees of the Magistrate, which are made by the light and the rule thereof, for the voice of the Magistrate speaking according to Gods word is like the voice of God among men, where God hath spoken clearly and expressely to the spirit and conscience of man there need no other lawes, but his owne, and so he hath done, in all matters, that concerne the substance of his owne worship, or our salvation, but in such things, which he hath not punctually determined, onely left them wrapped up in generall precepts; it becometh us to learne from his deputies upon earth asking councell of the Lord what his mind and pleasure is, and such for the most part, are the outward rites, formes, and circumstances of his Evangelicall worship, these things fall within the compasse of order and decency, which are rather civill notions then devine, yet as Armies in the field, easily fall into a rout, not well arrayed, so assemblies in the Church, and Churches in the Commonwealth prove but rude, and tumultuous meetings, if they be not decently ordered, a lute or violl is seen plaid upon; but there is much adoe, to tune many instruments, into one consort; private Christians may dispose of themselves, in their owne houses, but when they meet, in a publike body, they must be tuned by the publike Magistrate; the world would never have stood, without societies, nor can societies hold without government, neither can there be any government where some rule not, and some obey, all the question is, to set due limits and bounds to the civill government;

government; wherein I conceive, that there is the selfe, the same measure, betwixt the Magistrate and the conscience, for as the word of God bindeth the conscience to obey, so it prescribeth, the Magistrate to governe; otherwise if, as the high Priest forbad the Apostles, to teach in the name of Jesus; so the Magistrate shall impose any thing upon the people, contrary to divine law, or the word revealed, the case is plain, that we ought to obey God rather then men.

These rubbs thus remooved in our way, I shall proceed, to the solving of such objections, as are commonly made by those brethren, that challenge a liberty and exemption from this lawfull obedience.

1. First, they build upon our owne ground; alledging, that since the nature of conscience, is so free and voluntary in it self, it must needs be, a manifest violation of her freedom to constrain her, by laws, or penalties, or impositions of men. To which I answer, that we must remember to put a difference, betwixt the constraint, and the restraint of mens consciences, no law nor power of man, can constrain the conscience, in her voluntary act; to goe against her owne light, or approve that which she condemneth, or say to her self, conscience, I lye, no, she may and ought, rather to suffer, then undergoe such a constraint, but the lawes of man, may so farre, restrain their liberty, that she produce not the act, of her private sence and freedom, into hurtfull effects, such as may endanger and disturbe our christian and publike peace. it hath bin alwayes observed, that it is as naturall and appetitious for error, to beget error, & opinion, to spread opinion; as for one kind, to generate and multiply the same, insomuch, when an erroneous conscience, will not be limited nor contained within it self, it may and ought to be restrained and inhibited from infecting others, and dispersing the contagion.

2. Secondly, it may be againe objected, that although it be granted, nothing can bind the conscience, but the pure word of God, yet forasmuch, as no word of Scripture is produced, expressly confirming this from of polity and Presbyterian government.

ment, which we are commanded to obey; it will plainly follow, that the consciences of men, are therein left unto their liberty.

To give a full answer hereunto, it would be necessary to take the frame of this government in pieces. as the Levites did the Tabernacle, when they removed their Tents, and then bring it piece by piece, to the light of Gods word, to see what is thereby confirmed, and what unfirmed; But because this is already done by divers worthy brethren, of the holy calling, I shall forbear to insert, their volumes, into these few sheets, and shall onely say, that this kind of government, is either expresly, or by good consequence included, and allowed by the Scripture, as not repugnant to it in any thing: Of the Presbytery it selfe, where the government is inherent, I heare no question made, but that it is expresly mentioned in the Scripture, the main doubt and difference is, whither it be Independent in particular Congregations, subordinate to Synods and Assemblies, as the urgencies and occasions of the Church may require; Those Brethren, that maintain Independency of single Congregations stand upon a ground, feeble and unfirm, saying that in the Apostles time, there were no other Churches, but onely congregationall, in which alone, all government was confined. This assertion will hold no further true, then in such Churches as were gathered whiles Christ was upon earth: then indeed we may conceive, that the first Evangelicall Church, consisted in the congregation of the Apostles, and afterwards of the Disciples; but when Christ ascended into heaven, and the holy Ghost descended upon earth, we shall find, that when the multitude of believers increased so much in severall Cities, as one Congregation could not contain them: their manner was to distribute themselves into severall meetings, according to the commodity of their habitations in the said Cities, or else as it might most stand with their safety. Now th'Apostles themselves, and their coadjutors th'Evangelists, and other Founders of Churches under them, did usually constitute and ordain Elders in every City, but not in every Congregation, who had power in common and collegially to teach and govern the whole flock, though severally congregated in the same City.

Thus we read of the Elders of *Hiernusalem*, of *Antiochia*, of *Ephesus*, of *Corinth*, of *Philippi*, and many mo, where the numbers of the faithfull were enlarged. Whereby it appeareth, that in the Apostles times, and the times succeeding, those primitive Churches were City Churches, consisting of divers Congregations, and not congregationall, as is pretended, Independent within themselves. True it is, the City church was commonly independent within it selfe, but thereof the reason was, because the Cities in their civill policy, were free and unsubjected; otherwise the government of the City Church, reached as farre as the jurisdiction of the City. If all this be true, as it is made most evident, by the unpariall searchers of Antiquity, we may herein observe a pattern, though not a precept for the subordination of Churches; for if in the Apostles time, a City church consisted of many congregations, by the same proportion, according to the increase of Beleevers, a Provinciall Church, may consist of many Cities, and a Nationall Church of many Provinces, and the Catholick Church of many Nations; the lowest step was laid by the Apostles, the highest step is a point of our belief, and from the lowest to the highest, there is no passage but by gradations, which is the scale of that government, now held forth by Parliament. But to this may be replied; All this, that you say, is but conjecturall, and that hath no power to bind the conscience, which must have a word infallible to rest upon. To this I answer, That for the substance of this government, wee have the infallible word of God, whereof neither part doubteth; for the frame and circumstances thereof, we have also the word of man as infallible, as mans can be, for that we may take upon good trust, to be morally infallible, which proceeds from men, who neither deceive, nor are deceived. Now I suppose, that the Parliament hath so fully declared, their sincerity, and discharged their trust, in establishing this government, that the most opposite thereunto cannot admit of such an unworthy thought, as if they intended to impose any government upon the people, which in conscience, they thought not most agreeable to Gods word; which as it cleareth them, from the least suspicion of deceiving,

so

so it is also manifest, that they have used the best, and most approved means allowed to mortall man, not to be deceived; For in this waighy worke they have begun, with the invocation of Gods infalible Spirit; which is the Author and leader into all truth; and have assembled Learned and religious men of the holy calling, to enter into free deliberation, and debate, of that kind of Church-government, which they should find most consonant to Gods word; and if after all this, we can imagine they have erred in their decrees; How can we, without presumption, conceive the judgement of any private men to be more infallible. Now if any shall think that this kind of government in every part thereof is established, with such a perpetuall decree, that it can never be changed; We must know that many thing may be infallibly true, yet not alwayes necessary to be continued. True in the Author of truth, and true in the means of truth, and yet may be laid aside, when they are no longer usefull for edification, an example hereof, we may see in the ceremoniall Law, which being appointed by God himselfe, no man will doubt, but it was infallibly true, and being abolished by the same power that ordained it, no man need doubt, but that it was justly removed. Infallibility doth not alwayes inferre immutability. Things are not onely continued for their truth, but also for their goodnesse, and fitnesse, and applicablenesse to present use. So long as the Ceremoniall Law, was to indure, it was of divine infallibility, needfull for the Church of the Jewes, and during that time, immutable, by any power but divine: but when the Evangelicall Law succeeded, which by fulfilling, ended the Ceremoniall; the worship of God became more spirituell, leaving the decencies, circumstances, and outward manner, to the humane infallibility of the Magistrate, set in authoriity by God, whose decrees in such matters, are unchangeable by any inferiour power, yet alterable by the same power that decreed them.

Moreover the Papists object against our doctrine that before *Zuber* it was not known in thy world, and the Prelates object against our discipline, that before *Calvin* it was never known: by both with aspersions, they think to disgrace our doctrine, and our discipline,

pline, putting upon them the stamp of novelty, as though they were but inventions of men. But as our doctrine hath been sufficiently asserted against their calumnies, to be the very doctrine of the spirit of God, left & recorded in the holy Scriptures. So it is also plain, that this government of Gods Church, by the Presbytery was known and practised in the world, before either Popery or Prelacy was in being, both which are indeed novelties, and the very spawn of corrupted men. It is clearly demonstrated from the bosome of Antiquity; That the Apostles and Evangelists knowing the mind of Christ, did in all Cities and places where they collected Churches, ordain a Colledge of Presbyters called the Presbytery, with equal power to feed and govern the same. This form of government continued in the Primitive Church about 1500 yeares in puritie, and parity. Afterwards by pride, and contention of the leaders, Bishops were set up above Presbyters, and when that equality was once broken there was no stop. Then Metropolitans were put above Bishop, and Patriarks above Metropolitans, and at the last whereunto all tended, they brought forth that man of sin, or son of perdition the Pope, who perked above all; and hath ever since contrary to the rules of Christ and his Apostles, maintained by fraud, fire, and blood, a prodigious tyrannie and oppression in the Church. But there is one testimony more, which we can produce, as a cleare light out of the very darknesse, and dungeon of popery, when there was no day of knowledge in the Christian world, but all was overspread with Antichristian error, and that was about 500 yeares ago, when God moved *Waldo* a Citizen of *Lions* to discover the impostures of the popish Church, who drawing after him many disciples were persecuted by the bloody Synagogue, and driven from the society of men, into mountains among beasts, which they found lesse savage then their own kind, there they multiplied into many Congregations, and spreading themselves into divers places, were called by divers names. Then they found it necessary that the worship of God might be perfect among them, to establish a discipline and government over all their Churches, In which deliberation they had no pattern to follow, no steps to tread in, no helps from stories or records of antiquity, which were all destroyed or corrupted. Their
only

only guide, and light to direct them was the word of God, which the world was never able to extinguish, and by his divine power was preserved among them. There they sought, and there they found the platform of their discipline, and what was it? no other then Presbyterian; every Congregation governed by Pastors, Elders and Deacons, and as occasion required by a combination of them into Synods, Councils and Assemblies. Now if this way was practised among them, wherein they were only led by divine light. How unjustly do some despise it as a novelty, others reject it as a humane ordinance. When as our own age also, searching in the same holy monuments hath pitched upon the same discipline, as in them held forth to the Churches of God. Me thinks this would move the spirits of meek and sanctified men not to be wise above sobriety, nor contest against such a cloud of witnesses. For if the Primitive Apostolicall times; the middle age of the Church under persecution, and now the last generations wherein we live, have all by the light of Gods word, and guidance of his spirit, concurred in one and the same discipline. Why should any combine against it, or suffer themselves to be perswaded rather to disturb the peace and unity of Gods Churches, then yield a Christian conformity thereunto.

3 But against this power of the Magistrate, it may be further objected, that although power be given him, over the bodies and estates, and outward adjuncts of men; yet the conscience is the peculiar Court of God, wherein man hath nothing to do, but by intrusion; when the body lies in prison, the Judge by a *habeas corpus* can remove it, but when the conscience is under bond, no Judge can send a *habeas conscientiam*, to deliver it, and having no power to release, he can have none to bind it. Hereunto I answer, that the Magistrate pretendeth not to take power upon himself, as a man equall to his brethren, but the power he hath is derived from the supreme power, which he holdeth by Commission from God. His Office is the Ordinance of God, and his power is ordained of God, and so long as he ruleth for good, aiming at the publick order and edification of the Church, we read that of necessity he must be obeyed, a double necessity both for fear of bodily punishment, God having put into the Magistrates hand a sword of justice, which he

hath:

hath not done into the Ministers; as also for conscience sake, and fear of divine punishment, for men that make no conscience of breaking the precepts of God shall certainly not go unpunished; conscience therefore yielding sometimes in lawfull as well as in absolute necessary things, this obedience to the Magistrate, is not bound by the will of the Magistrate, but by the word of God himself, which expressly commandeth us to obey the Magistrate for conscience sake; but we no where find that for conscience sake in such things we should disobey him. If any reply that if all this collected and spoken to maintain the power of the magistrate is no more then was before alledged, in the times of Episcopall Prelacy; who by giving credit to the Magistrate, and the Magistrate to their cause imposed and injoynd what they pleased in Gods worship, and government of the Chutch. I confesse indeed that they argued very strongly for upholding the authority of the Magistrate, so farre, that by exalting his will, they diminished his power, but leaving them in their excessse, I answer, that if their government had been as good as their argument, or had they stuck as close to the word of God, in framing their Cannons and injunctions, as they did in asserting the lawfull power of the Magistrate, no man could have justly been grieved in conscience, but their government being bad in it self, could not be bettered by the goodnesse of the argument. But it may be rejoyned again, that for all this, the Scripture doth no where appoint or confirm this Presbyteriall government, as it is held forth and established by the State, and therefore just it is, that men should be left in liberty of their consciences, whether they would conform thereunto or no. This hath in part been answered before. That it is not the mind of the Magistrate to compell any man to conform thereunto against his conscience, neither could he do it, although he so intended, and therefore in effect that is but a vain, feigned, and frivolous plea, to pretend that liberty against the Magistrate, which no Magistrate can constrain, onely as the Apostle saith of faith about indifferent things; *hast thou faith, have it to thy self before God.* So we may say in this case, *hast thou liberty, have it to thy self bewixt God and thee, till he shall give thee a further light, and a liberty to obey, as well as to disobey, but if thou contentest not thy self*

selfe with this sober and moderate liberty; but whilst also leap
 over the hedge, and withdraw others from their Christian obe-
 dience; then thou runnest upon the sword of the Magistrate,
 which God hath put into his hands for the common good, by
 which he is bound to restrain thy inordinate and offensive liber-
 ty, that it disturbe not the publike peace committed to his charge.
 To this may be added, that although this Presbyteriall govern-
 ment, in every part and parcell thereof, as it is now established,
 be not expressly commanded in Scripture (as likewise no other
 kind of government whatsoever) yet much may be brought for
 the approbation of it, and to shew that it is repugnant to Scrip-
 ture. First, government by a Presbytery, is expressly set down in
 Scripture; Secondly, for execution thereof, some generall rules
 are also clearly expressed, That all things should be done decent-
 ly, and in order, without contention, and for edification. Thirdly,
 to whom can we imagine the ordering, and decencies, and edifi-
 cation should belong, but onely to the Magistrate, assisted by the
 advice of Gods holy word and Ministers, wherein wee find ano-
 ther expresse command, that the Magistrate so judging for the
 good of all, ought to be obeyed for conscience sake. Bring we
 this cause to a paire of scales, and there we shall see it decided;
 put into one scale the judgement of the Magistrate, into the
 other the judgement of private men; put into either, the pro-
 fession of them both, to make the word of God the rule of their
 judgement; put in again, that upon search therein, they meet
 with two severall governments, neither of them directly com-
 manded, nor directly forbidden, nor yet unconsonant to the
 Word. Hitherto the beam goes even betwixt them. Search a-
 gain, what is to be put in more, and we shall find an expresse
 word of God, commanding every private soule to obey the high-
 er powers, judging and governing for good, and that for consci-
 ence sake, put this into the Magistrates scale, and it must needs
 preponderate till we can find any other word, that biddeth the
 higher power be subject to the lower. And indeed, were there
 no word of Scripture to confirme this truth, the very light of
 reason might convince us, for if we allow that reason should rule

our affections, we must also allow the Magistrate to rule the people, and when any difference ariseth between them in such things wherein they pretend to judge by one and the selfe-same rule, reason requireth that the determination of the Magistrate should stand, and that the people should no longer be wise in their own conceit, but be wise with sobriety suffering their judgments to be over-ruled by their Rulers, whose office is to watch over them for good in the order of such things; Whiles things are debating every one may have liberty to speake their conscience, but when things are determined, the liberty of conscience must yeild to the duty of obedience, otherwise that sweet harmony would be broken, which God hath set in the world between parties commanding, and parties obeying, wherein alone consisteth the outward happinesse of all societies. In the meantime I am glad to observe, that they disclaim not civill obedience, to the civill power of the Magistrate, hoping that in time they will for the same reason cease to contend against this government, for that it is now indeed, or intended to be made a civill sanction, and a statute law. And then denying subjection thereunto; Liberty of conscience may aswell transport them to claim exemption from many other civill lawes. If one of them were accused of murder, and knew in his own conscience that he was innocent, and had beside twenty witnesses to clear him, yet if one single witnesse shall make oath against him, in behalfe of the King, he shall be condemned by the law. May he not stand upon termes of his liberty, and his innocence, and justly plead that it is against his conscience to obey this law, and suffer sentence being innocent? Suppose another had lived many yeares separated from his wife, in which time she had divers children by another man; by the law he shall be enjoyned to father them all; may he not plead, that it is against his conscience to take upon him the fathering of another mans children? Many such examples might be brought, wherein the consciences of men seem to have more just pretences, to withdraw their obedience, from such civill lawes, then from this law of government, so fully debated, and so duly established. Besides, inasmuch, as our brethren require a
toleration,

toleration, of their own government, they do tacitly acknowledge a power in the Magistrate, to gratifie them, or deny them; and consequently, they may also acknowledge, that this power, is either lawfull, or unlawfull; if it be lawfull, they are with us bound to obey it; if unlawfull, they are bound to disprove it; which when they go about; godly pens will not be wanting, to endeavour, to give them satisfaction.

4. Moreover, it is said by some, that whatsoever is imposed by man in the worship of God, not directly specified in his Word, falleth under the condemnation, of will-worship, humane traditions, or inventions of men. This is too large an assertion to be ever well proved, for it is true neither way. Neither whatsoever is omitted in Scripture, to be rejected as wil-worship; nor whatsoever is recorded in Scripture to be retained of perpetuall necessity. We read, that the first administration of Baptism, used to be performed in open rivers, which with us would be thought rude and dangerous; The Saints had a custome in the close of their holy meetings, to salute one another with a holy kisse, which in our Congregations might be thought carnall and lascivious; they also were wont, after the celebration of the blessed Eucharist, to bring their provisions together, and make love-feast, which among us would be esteemed loose and luxurious. When a Brother or Sister was sick, the Elders of the Church were sent for, to pray over them, and anoint them with oile, which in our visitations might be held superstitious, or perhaps sifter for a Physician then a Minister. All these customes, and many others passed with edification, in the innocency and infancy of these first times; which not conforring with ours, are universally disused. On the other side, the times and places of divine worship, the seats and gestures of the worshippers, the manner of publike Praying, and Preaching, of singing of Psalms, of collecting Almes, of assembling and dismissing the people, the forme of administration and receiving the holy Sacraments, and many other things concerning the outward publick communion of Saines, are for the most part undeclared in Scripture, yet in full use and practise among us without offence, that therefore

must be understood for a wil-worship, and humane invention, which is set up for some humane and carnall end, repugnant to Gods word, and to his glory.

5. There be yet remaining two more objections, arising from two contrary grounds, one from pretence of weaknesse, th'other from presumption of strength. Those that lay forth the tender-nesse of conscience, forget not to produce those heavenly exhortations, whereof the Scripture is full; that we should not bruise the broken reede nor offend the least of the little ones, nor cast stumbling blocks before our brethren nor use our liberty to the destroying of the weake, but rather spread the covering of love over our brethrens infirmities, to raise up one another in the spirit of meeknesse; to beare with the weake, and please one another for good edification; yea, rather to abstain from matters, which we think lawfull, then to compell others to things, they judge unlawfull: This they say was the doctrine and the pattern, which Christ, and his Apostles taught, and practised among the faithfull; which, because I intend not to deny, I shall onely examine, how fitly they are applyed to the controversie in hand, and whether they be of force, to absolve weake brethren, from their due obedience, to Gods Magistrate.

We are therefore to understand, that all those excellent rules set down by the Apostles, for tendering of weak consciences, receive a double limitation; First, they were limited to the state of those times, with respect to the condition of private Christians, and their carriage one towards another. For in the Apostles age, nor long after, there was in the world neither Christian, Kingdome, Common-wealth, nor Magistrate, whereby these Rulers, were neither given to them, who were not then inbeing, nor for ought we find, intended so for them, when God should raise them up in his Church. The contrary rather appeareth; for Christ himselfe coming to set up a spirituall Kingdome, in his Church, intended onely to pull down the kingdom of Satan, but not the Kingdomes of the world, those he left standing, not refusing, to pay for himself and his Apostle, tribute to *Cesar*, nor yet to answer before the Courts and Tribunalls of the Jewes.
After

After Christs example, th' Apostles were very carefull to instruct the faithfull, that they should walke with circumspection, without blame or reproach, lest if they should transgresse the law, or commit scandalls, or fall into divisions among themselves, they should make the name of God, and that holy profession, which they had undertaken to be blasphemed among the heathen; ordaining them moreover to make prayers, and supplications for all in authority, and to give them obedience for conscience sake, indeed the Gospell is called a law of liberty, because through Christ it freeth us from the bondage of sinne, the slavery of Satan, and the feare of death, not because, it dischargeth us of our Christian duty and obedience to the Magistrate; in which case, it giveth no liberty nor exemption. From whence we may conclude, that if Christ and his Apostles subjected the beleivers of those times, both by their precept and practise, to unbelieving powers; It was never their meaning, to exempt the faithfull of our times, from their due obedience, to Christian and believing Magistrates. Secondly, these Evangelicall rules, for the ease of tender consciences, respected especially indifferent things. The Christians of those dayes consisted of two sorts; the converted Jewes, and converted Gentiles. The Jewes trained up in the Ceremoniall Law, which they knew was appointed by God, made a conscience of meats, and dayes, and other rites, and rudiments of the time, as yet not convinced that they were abolished by the comming of Christ. These were then the weak Christians. On the other side, the Gentiles were fully instructed in their liberty, that they might use them, or not use them, as they pleased; They were then the strong Christians; The Apostle therefore, to lay the foundation of charity aright, and preserve these dissenting brethren in the unity of the Spirit, and bond of Peace, giveth these rules about indifferent things; That the strong should not despise the weak, nor the weak, censure the strong, because whether they eat, or eat not, they do it to the Lord, and are of him accepted; and being both accepted of the Lord, they ought not to be condemned, by one another. In this case therefore, things, by nature indifferent, should make no difference.

difference betwixt brethren; but so to be used, or not used, that
 now and then, for charity sake, the expediency of them, should
 suspend their lawfulness. This is the Apostles doctrine, instru-
 cting private Christians, about indifferent things. Which though
 they reach not, the Magistrate in his office, yet they do, in his
 profession; having given up his name to Christ, and living in a
 Christian society. And hath our religious Magistrate transgres-
 sed these rules? Let us see what he hath done, for the reliefe of
 tender consciences; many grievances were complained of, in the
 Episcopall times, which the Parliament hath removed; They
 have taken away consecration of dayes and places, the superstiti-
 on of meats and drinks, Images and Altars, Crosses and Surpli-
 ces; the usurpation of spirituall Courts, and temporall Bishops;
 which were all abused with a danger to introduce Popery and
 Idolatry: will not these things, satisfie weake and tender con-
 sciences, unlesse they take away Government also, which is com-
 manded, and sanctified by the Word? therefore we must know,
 that government of the Church, in publike Assemblies, is no in-
 different thing, nor to be reckoned in their number; God is not
 the Author of anarchy and confusion; but of order, comelinesse,
 and peace: and when, the manner of government, and Gods
 worship, in the circumstances thereof, are rightly ordered, ac-
 cording to the light of nature, and Christian prudence, dedusted
 from the generall rules set down in the Word, and settled by just
 and lawfull authority. It is no longer left to the liberty of any
 man, subject to the same authority, to conform, or not conform
 thereunto, as though it were a thing indifferent, much lesse, to
 pretend, that because their consciences cannot approve thereof, it
 should be permitted to them, to set up another government;
 which seemeth to be a most unreasonable demand, that whiles
 they deny obedience, to the Magistrates lawes, they should ne-
 verthelesse seek for liberty and power from them, to overthrow
 their own orders, and make them, crosse shinns, with their own
 authority. The power of the Magistrate and liberty purchased
 by Christ, do not destroy, but support one another; for they are
 both truths, avowed in the Word, and no truth can overthrow
 another.

(31)

another. And if any man say, that a weak conscience, though it be in an error, yet till it be convinced, should sin, in obeying the truth; it may be replied *a fortiori*, that the Magistrate determining the truth, cannot tolerate any error, without sinning against his conscience, and partaking of those errors, he condemneth.

6. But the other objection, proceeding from a conceit of strength, marcheth with more assurance; for some imagine, that forasmuch, as they are justified by grace, and freed from sin, and heirs of the promise; they are consequently in a state of perfection, able to fulfill the law of God, and delivered from all lawes of men. Por, *lex non ponitur iusto*; They have no need of repentance, being secur'd from falling. Nor much of faith, being already in fruition, they are a law unto themselves, under no Magistrate, above all penalty, as if they were out of the flesh, having shaken off frailty and mortality, and climbed up, to the new *Jerusalem*, where there is neither sin nor sorrow. This being a sweet fancy to them, that are possessed with all, will hardly suffer it selfe to be removed, by force of argumentation: Other wise we might say; That never any man, was without sin, but Christ alone, who was like to man in all things, sin excepted. That the blessed Apostle felt a law in his members, which made him doe that he would not, and will, that he did not. He biddeth us work out our salvation, with fear and trembling, not with surquedry and presumption; when we have done our best, and seem to be most perfect, we are but unprofitable servants. Many such divine testimonies, might be brought, to convince this opinion; but it refuteth it selfe, being contrary to the rule of faith, and condition of humanity. We must not think, that the grace of God, worketh against his will; his will is, that we should be militant, in this life; wherefore we must not expect to be triumphant, till the warre be done; his will is, that we should grow to our full stature by degrees; and scale the ladder of heaven, not be taken up in a whirlwind. His will is, that we should be tempted and buffeted, and fall and rise; that seeing our frailty and our misery, we should seek for the renewing of his grace, and every day.

day beg, our daily pardon, more dully, then our daily bread. Forasmuch as by strength of nature, we may abstain awhile from food, but by corruption of nature, we cannot abstain awhile from sin. This error puffing up the hearts of unstable men, hath heretofore brought forth furious, and pernicious effects.

The story of *John a Leyden*, and *Knipperdolling*, and of their phrensies at *Munster*, is not yet forgotten. I pray God our times be not pregnant, of some such monster. What is the meaning, that so many in our dayes, separate from their brethren, as if all others were prophane? Why do they gather in heaps together, like biles and ulcers, drawing the corruption with them, and yet say the body is unclean? In such manner, began they of *Munster*; they took upon them a garb of simplicity, they seemed grave and dejected, fervent in long prayers, full of revelations, lamenting the fashions and prophaneſſe of the times, contemning honours, despising money, and neglecting Matrimonie, wishing, and weeping for reformation; by such hypocrisies they captivated, weak and wandring soules, who tooke them onely, to be the little flock of heaven, that lived among wolves, and was persecuted on earth. Till having made up their musters, and assembled their troops, they set up a standard, calling the multitude, into their snare, under the promise, and proclamation of liberty. Now the blessed time was come, that the meek should inherite the earth; that the Kings and Potentates, and *Adonibezecks* of this world, who had done dispite and violence to the Saints, should be broken with a rod of iron, and dashed in pieces like a Potters vessell. Thence they fell into revelations, and found it written in the beams of the Sun, that *John a Leyden* was appointed by Christ, to be King over all the world, and rule the Nations in righteousness and in power. After this, the King was inspired, to set up sundry Queens, and to take to himselfe many wives at once; to increase and multiply the holy seed upon earth. But this imaginary kingdome, was of short durance; for the neighbour Princes, finding their designe, joyned against them, as against the enemies of mankind: and after they had indured a long siege; their King, by revelation, assured them, that before Easter, they should have deliverance.

deliverance. But when none appeared, he told them, that he had been in a trance six dayes, in which time, he had ridden on a blind Ass, and that God the Father, had laid upon his back the finnes of them all, whereby they were set free and delivered from them; And this was the deliverance he promised, wherewithall, they ought to rest contented; Thereupon the Town was taken, the deluded people, disabused, the King impostor, executed to death, and hung up in chaines, upon the highest steeple, thus ended this tragedy, and ever tragicall is the end of such follies; The Apostle noteth, that factions and divisions, are signes of carnality; first, men separate from others, as unclean, then they speak evill of government, the next step, is to blind the people with revelations; from thence they fall into snares of the flesh; at last, they stir up sedition, and last of all, their end is destruction.

Hitherto, I have laboured to shew, that the Magistrate, by his office, being an ordinance of God, is bound to provide for the Publick peace and safety in Church and Common-wealth, which is done first by enacting just lawes, and wholesome orders, consonant to wisdom, and the word of God; and secondly, by using his power, to preserve them, in vigor and execution; as also to shew, that the people are bound in conscience, to give willing obedience, to such Lawes and orders of the Magistrate, whose duty it is, to restrain the disobedient, and reduce them, to their duty; Neverthelesse, forasmuch, as the power, wherewithall God hath invested the Magistrate, is alwaies to be used for publike good; and requisite it is, that a due distinction be made in the punishment of offenders, between such as erre out of mistake or ignorance, and those that resist, out of wilfulness and contempt. I shall in all humbleness propound some few expedients how farre the Magistrate may please to slacken his power, and so temper the lawes, and penalties thereof; as they may serve both waies, as lenitives for the simple, and corrigives for the stubborn, who will not otherwise be reformed.

I conceive, that as it is unreasonable to demand so it would be dangerous to grant, any toleration of Religion, besides that which is established, for such a liberty of conscience, would breed

a freedome of will, and freedome of will would beget liberty of life, which would breed a fearfull Independency, when every one might do what they list; In matters of faith, necessary to salvation, there is but one way, and one truth; all the rest, is obliquity and error. Therefore when the truth, hath been tried, by the Word, and ratified by the Magistrate, he cannot suffer any falsehood, without being accessory thereunto; Yet in matters of discipline and government, there is a greater latitude; for when it shall appeare, that weak brethren, agreeing in the same confession of faith but dissenting in outward forms, out of tendernesie or ignorance; to such a toleration, or connivence, or suspension of laws, may be harmlesse and charitable, till they be further satisfied and instructed.

2. That whosoever living under the subjection of this state, should be so far destitute of grace, as to renounce Christ, or speak blasphemously of him, or any person of the Trinity; contrary to the faith established in the Church; he shall upon conviction, be informed of the truth, with a brotherly admonition, not to divulge his error, to the corruption or scandall of others, or disturbance of the civill peace. For the second offence, he shall indure a years imprisonment, be disabled in his testimony, put out of protection of the Lawes, and wear some publike mark, noting him for a Blasphemer: For the third offence, he shall suffer banishment; or close and perpetuall imprisonment; and if banished it shall be capitall for him to return, without licence of the State. For if he by our lawes deserveth death, that seduceth any subject, from the allegiance of his naturall Prince; what deserveth he, that seeketh to alienate the soule of any Christian, from the dependance of God, unto the divell?

3. If any one, out of an evill heart, shall break forth into open reviling, scorning, disgracefull words against the present Church-government, now established, he shall not be connived at, as a man of tender conscience: for as he giveth himselfe power and liberty to dis-joyn from it, so it is also in his power, not to speak evill of it, but doing it by choice and deliberation; he cannot fall within the compasse of weaknesse. For he that maketh no conscience, of giving offence and scandall to the Christian Magistrate,

and

and all his godly brethren, living in peaceable obedience; cannot imagine, that his private fancies, though covered with weaknesse, should be more tendered, then the publike conscience of the Common-wealth. Such a one therefore ought to be punished, as a contemner of the civill power. First, by reproof and exhortation, not to disquiet, the peace of the Land; Secondly, by a pecuniary mulct, for some publike use, with disability of his credit; Thirdly, if he still persist, with close imprisonment, till, he give publike satisfaction of his repentance.

4. Forasmuch, as no man ought to undertake the office and function, of the holy Church Ministry, without he be well assured of his inward calling thereunto; neither can such men conceive themselves, awhit the worse, or that it might be any prejudice to their spirituall gifts, to have an outward approbation, by laying on the hands of the Presbytery, and praying for divine blessing upon their persons, and giving them an orderly mission, into Gods harvest? Therefore whosoever shall take unto himselfe the holy calling, presuming to preach the Word or administer the Sacraments, not being admitted, nor ordained thereunto, by lawfull authority; he ought to be punished as the former were, that contemned the civill power, or rather more severely; especially if they be found in their publike preaching, to sow sedition among the people; provided, that such persons, Masters of families, or others, meeting in their own houses, or in their neighbours, to repeat what they heard or learned, out of Sermons preached by authority; and upon that or the like occasion, worship God by praying or singing of Psalmes, conferring or arguing, upon any part of the Word preached, as also such, who being required, by any friend or neighbour (when the advice of Ministers, cannot be had) to open or expound some text of Scripture, or deliver his judgement upon any case of conscience, for satisfaction of the parties, be not comprehended under this Article, or any penalty thereof, because we are commanded, to exercise the gifts and talents, God hath given us, in a sober and orderly way, for the edification of one another.

5. Whereas out of all doubt, many things are contained in

holy Scripture, which are not yet fully manifested, nor clearly understood; and we know the Spirit of God, bloweth where he listeth, and is not confined, to time, place, nor person, but inspirerth whom he pleaseth. If therefore any man shall pretend, to have a new opinion, or new light revealed unto him, of the sense of any part of Scripture, sitting it were, he should bring his knowledge to some godly Minister, approved of; or to the next Classis, where he liveth, there to be tried and examined by the spirit of the Prophets, judging and determining by the word of God, and if perchance they neither approve of his opinion, nor yet be able to convince him; then to refer him, to the next Nationall Councell to which he must stand or fall. In the mean time, if he publish his opinion, under hand, to the breach of brotherly unity in the Church; he ought to be taken, as a disturber of public peace, and subject to the penalties mentioned in the third Article.

By these and such like means, the power of the civill Magistrate, may be preserved from contempt; and the consciences of weak brethren from constraint; till they shall pluck off their mask, and discover themselves to be obstinate, and unsufferable; clamouring for toleration, under pretence of weaknesse; but indeed, making a breach and separation, in confidence of their own strength and perfection, disdainning with supercilious eyes, the infirmities of their brethren; by which falacie, they think to blear the eye of the Magistrate and make the weak, to overthrow the strong. To such wolves in sheeps cloathing, whether they be Papists, Hereticks, Schismatics, or whatsoever they be (for a weak conscience is now-a-days, become a cloak, for all shoulders) my meaning is not, that any indulgence or connivence of the Magistrate, should be extended to them, who it is plain enough are employed in malicious designs, working underground, the divisions and ruine of the State.

Therefore to conclude with the same spirit, as I began; which is a spirit of unity, peace, and love. In the fear, and before the face of Almighty God, and by the bowells of that love wherewith Christ Jesus loved us all; I do beseech the brethren, whether they be

be leaders or followers, that agree with us in the same doctrine, but dissent in government; to lay their hands upon their hearts, and examine, what they would be at. Is it, at the advancement of truth, the practise of holiness, the purity of Gods worship? Let them consider, whether all these may not be had, as they are all intended under the present government; is it at spirituall perfection, whiles they are present in the flesh? Let them consider, that the perfection of a Christian, consisteth, in humility, love, peace, meeknesse, sobriety and uprightnesse, which are truly spirituall, and none of them excluded, by this government. Is it at the setting up of the kingdome of Christ Jesus; that he might raigne, as Lord omnipotent upon earth? Let them consider, that the kingdome of Christ Jesus, is not of this world, he prescribeth no forms, nor modell's of civill government, as he findeth them, so he leaveth them, where he is received; he sublimeth and refineth them where he is not received, hee doth not destroy them. Let them consider, that this present government, doth no waies eclipse the kingdome of Christ Jesus; for whether it be placed in a single Congregation, or in a generall Assembly, or in the last resort of the supreme Magistrate; all are under the government of Christ Jesus, who ruleth among them, by his Word; whereunto, they conform their government: is it at the setting up of any other government, which they think is onely divine, and necessary to salvation? Let them consider, that by such assertions, they do not onely blast all reformed Churches at this day, and leave them in a state of condemnation living under another government, but also condemn multitudes of soules departed, which under other governments, lived Saints upon earth, died martyrs for the faith of Christ, and are now triumphant in heaven. Or els is it at no government at all, till they receive one revealed from heaven? Let them consider, whether any such promise be made us in Scripture, which we ought to expect; This wee find, that God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace, order, and government, which ought to be set'ed in all Churches of the Saints. Or lastly, is it to set up an infallibility of private judgement, taking themselves to abound in the spirit,

and be able to judge all above them? Let them consider, that their hearts and spirits of men, are deceitfull, above all deceits, and that to strive and contend to make rents and separation for these things, to despise the powers and ordinances of God, are reckoned among the workes of the flesh, rank and carnall. But if it be as I will hope it is, a pure and sincere weaknesse of conscience, arising from a weaknesse of judgement; nor yet seeing the clearnesse of that light, which hath in lightened the Magistrates and Ministers, and greatest part of the Kingdome. Let them be intreated in the fear of God, to seek to him for further illumination; and in the mean time, to suspend their opinions, and forbear contentions by Christian modesty and moderation, becomming the Saints, to maintain Christian charity, which is the bond of perfection, and make it manifest unto the world, and to the Angels in heaven, that they are not led, by the spirit of error, strife and vain-glory, but by the spirit of truth, which worketh by love; and lowlinesse, patience and meeknesse; minding the same things, and improving the gifts of faith, & grace and knowledge, whereunto they have already attained. And in other things of lesser moment, concerning the formes of discipline and government, and the outward face of order and decency in the publike worship, whereunto perhaps not having yet attained, they may be otherwise minded therein to wait Gods time, with quiet and patience, who hath promised to reveale, even that also unto them, that one may not be perfect, without another. It may be, they may thinke themselves unkindly dealt withall, and very ill requited, that having so frankly adventured their lives and estates, and done so valiantly, against the enemies of God and the Land, they should after all this, be denied any request, especially, that which so nearly toucheth, their freedome of conscience, and inward peace. Truly it is on all hands confessed, and no man that I know, seeketh to cast a vaile over their worth, or suppressed their achievements. God hath done wonderfull things; by many of their hands and the lesse honour, they take to themselves, the more will be given them, by the voice of the Nation, and Rulers of the band, who ought to take care, that their names be
written

written in the Registers of fame, from generation to generation. But what will our dissenting brethren say, if Jesuits and Malig-nents converse among them, in sheeps-clothing; If transformed into Angels of light, they carry on these workes of darknesse, and by secret suggestions, and insinuations of the Serpent, make them blow this cole, and widen this breach against their own intentions? It is not for nought, that there be so many popish spies and Agents among us; whose employment is, to weaken the hands of the Magistrate, by sowing factions and disobedience among the people. They feele their blow, and know well enough that their form is broken, they are upon their last gaspe, and their last refuge is this, to compasse that by trechery and mischief, which they could not do, by force in the field; If they can divide the civill and Military power, and fling fire-balls of division into the tents of brethren, they have yet a fainting hope to recover strength, and destroy them both. Let not our brethren think this, to be an eary or empty admonition; for there be men so finely spirited, and rarified to the invisibility of the divell; that if it were possible, they would deceive the very Elect, and weave their hypocriticall webbs, with liberty, that commonly the simple, and many times the circumspect are involved, and taken. Happy it were, that by some marke, they might be known, for then they were easily avoided; but when they come, to strike up division, and separate the hearts of the brethren; the safest remedy is to stop our eares, as against Inchanters, and Negotiators for the divell. Return then O Shulamite, return, return; be not intrapped in the snares of division; but return to the tents of peace: what will ye see in the Shulamites? we shall see, when he returneth and joyneth his body to the State, and his conscience to the Church, that his countenance is faire as the Moon, clear as the Sun, terrible, as an Army with banners; and that his company united to the Common-wealth, is like the association of two Armies, linked together by one heart, invincible and undissolvable, by the powers of darknesse and of Anti-christ.

Thus have I delivered my poor judgement, and discharged my duty,

duty, which I owe to the public peace. I pretend not to sorow-
 lation, nor an unerring spirit; but being privy to the eventfall
 of mine own heart, and unbiaſed intentions; my conscience is
 my testimony, that I have not erred, to cause any other man not
 erre. In regard whereof, I may hope, that all men, who are spi-
 rituall, and dis-interessed in their ends, will acknowledge this
 to be the mind of Christ, so far forth at least, as it aimed and
 tendeth to piety and peace. Nevertheless, if any will be still
 contentious and dissent, neither I, nor the Church of God,
 have any such custome; nor do I intend, for this difference of
 judgement, to breake charity and communion with them. But
 I rather beseech them, for a close of all; to put on milde and
 gentle affections; and whiles they approve of our faith, not to
 disapprove our workes, by excommunicating of us, or separating
 from us; till our workes go before us, and condemn our selves.
 Leaving them, in this assurance, that when our Lord Jesus Christ
 shall come, the Judge and Master of us all, to whom we must
 stand or fall; it will be better for them, and for us in that day,
 that he find our hearts established in grace, then our selves at va-
 riance about Church-government.

P I N S.

That his company united to the Common-wealth, is like the al-
 location of two Amies, linked together by one heart, invin-
 cle and unshakable by the powers of darkness and of Anti-
 christ.

Thus have I delivered my poor judgement and discharge my
 duty.

